

Solar Power Lights the Philippines

MINDANAO, Philippines—Two solar-powered fluorescent bulbs light up the home of Sharift Ladjahali, the former chairman of Lagasan, a small village (or barangay) in the Philippines' Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.

Ladjahali lives in one of 300 houses hooked up to a recently installed solar-powered battery-charging station that permits people to replace costly kerosene with much less expensive solar lighting.

Solar power also runs streetlights and community lighting, improving safety and allowing people to spend more time together in the evenings.

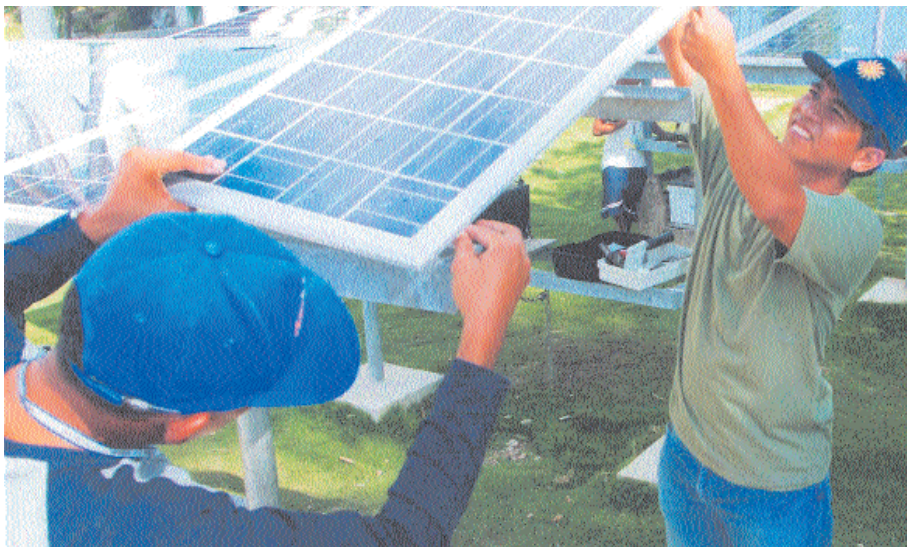
Communities in Muslim Mindanao, once a rebel stronghold, are too distant to be connected to the national electric grid.

The Alliance for Mindanao Off-Grid Renewable Energy (AMORE) program is bringing solar-powered electricity to 5,000 homes in 160 remote rural communities in Muslim Mindanao. AMORE is a \$9.5 mil-

lion partnership of USAID/Philippines, the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, Mirant Philippines Corp., and the Philippines Department of Energy. Mirant Philippines Corp. procures renewable energy equipment while USAID helps communities install, manage, and operate the new systems. USAID plans to spend up to \$6.4 million and Mirant plans to invest \$3.2 million with the local communities donating labor and maintenance.

U.S. Ambassador, Francis J. Ricciardone said, "The AMORE partners—private Filipino communities, Mirant Corporation of the American private sector, and the American and Philippine governments—truly are working together to make this a new Age of Enlightenment for the remotest communities. And it is high time. With the advanced technologies available today, no one should be left in the dark." ★

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Filipino community members install solar panels for a battery-charging station under the AMORE project, which is bringing solar-generated electricity to remote rural communities in Muslim Mindanao.